

## Trade Ban Rejected for Atlantic Bluefin Tuna and Sharks



DOUG OLANDER

*Bluefin tuna are the most valuable fish in any sea today. Single-fish prices can reach tens of thousands of dollars.*

**A**t its mid-March meeting in Qatar, the United Nation's Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) rejected a ban on international trade of severely overfished Atlantic bluefin tuna. Introduced by Monaco, the ban drew the support of the United States, Norway and Kenya, Africa. The European Union also supported it, but with a one-year implementation delay to give participating nations time to respond to overfishing concerns.

Japan, which imports most of the world's bluefin catch for its sushi market, aggressively campaigned against any trade restrictions. Many poor fishing nations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and

the Caribbean backed Japan, claiming a trade ban would unfairly burden their fishing communities.

Sharks — being decimated globally for fins and meat or as bycatch — fared no better at the CITES meeting. Scientists estimate that some shark populations have fallen by 99 percent. Four proposals were brought to CITES to closely monitor and regulate trade for eight shark species: three kinds of hammerheads, porbeagle, spiny dogfish, oceanic whitetip, dusky and sandbar. All four proposals failed. Visit [www.cites.org](http://www.cites.org).

### Great Marlin Race 2009 Winner Announced!

In July 2009, a team of scientists headed by Dr. Randy Kochevar of Stanford University worked with anglers participating in the 50th Hawaiian International Billfish Tournament (HIBT) in Kona, Hawaii, to put satellite tags in marlin that were caught and released. The point of the research was to determine how fast and far afield the marlin would travel — in essence, creating a race between tagged marlin.

Dr. Kochevar says, "Of the seven 'race' tags deployed during the

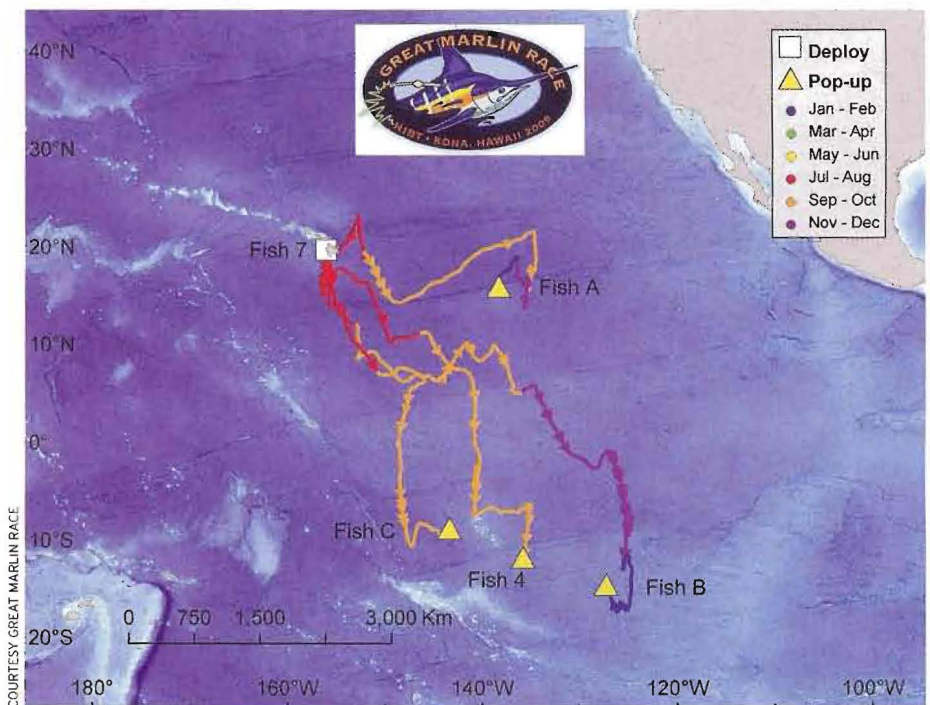
HIBT, five never reported in — although a relatively low success rate, it is not without precedent. Other extended blue marlin satellite tagging efforts have encountered similar problems, for reasons not fully understood. However, with each successive tagging effort, valuable information is gained, and the Great Marlin Race is no exception."

After more than six months of racing along with the requisite data analysis, the "Race



JJ SLATER

*Satellite tagging marlin like this can give researchers data like that below — where the fish went over time.*



COURTESY GREAT MARLIN RACE

## SPORTFISHING NEWS

Committee" — as Kochevar refers to his research team — is pleased to announce the results of the inaugural Great Marlin Race.

The marlin designated Fish Number 4 traveled 2,225 nautical miles from Kona over the course of just 93 days! Its satellite tag popped off just east of the Marquesas Islands and broadcast all its tracking data back to the researchers.

Quite a journey for a Pacific blue marlin estimated to weigh only 140 pounds! With this victory, the Kurz family of Laguna Niguel Billfish Club Team 1 won a free entry to the 2010 HIIBT. Fish Number 7's tag deployed after only eight days.

One real surprise for researchers was how differently each of the long-distance fish behaved. Two marlin (Fishes C and 4) followed similar paths to the Marquesas Islands, where they arrived in late


October. Fish B also ultimately wound up in the vicinity of the Marquesas but spent much more time in the Northern Hemisphere, not even crossing the equator until mid-November. It arrived at its pop-up destination on Jan. 30. Fish A did something entirely different, migrating gradually east from Hawaii, winding up about 1,036 nautical miles east of Hawaii in completely open ocean.

Of course, with information come more questions! Researchers want to know if the Marquesas might be another spawning area for Pacific blue marlin as they have determined the Big Island of Hawaii is. Or do marlin just go there to feed? Equally puzzling is why one marlin traveled aimlessly east of Hawaii.

Dr. Kochevar invites you to visit <http://thunnus.stanford.edu:81/joomla/index.php/about-the-gmr/full-page-map.html> to see the actual tracking data with the fish paths and times. And for more information on the Great Marlin Race, visit [www.greatmarlinrace.org](http://www.greatmarlinrace.org).

### Georgia Coalition Launches Operation ROE (Release Over Eighteen)

A coalition of angler-supported conservation groups, including Coastal Conservation Association Georgia, Georgia Wildlife Federation, Satilla Riverkeeper, Georgia Kayak Fishing, Ogeechee Riverkeeper and Savannah Riverkeeper, has asked Georgia's fishermen to ensure the future



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JOHN N. FELLSHER

Conscientious Southeastern anglers hope that releasing their trout will mean more like this beauty in the future.